

Minnesota Statewide Adult Drug Court Evaluation Information

The document is intended to give an informational overview of the Statewide Adult Drug Court Evaluation currently in progress in the State Court Administrator's Office. Results, and a final report, will be completed in December of 2011. Please see the Timeline for more information.

In the fall of 2006, the Minnesota State Court Administrator's Office convened a group of experts in evaluation and drug court operations to design a comprehensive statewide plan for evaluating Minnesota's specialty courts. In 2008, this group, the Statewide Drug Court Evaluation Committee, began a drug court evaluation by identifying a cohort of drug court participants to study over a two year period of time.

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Timeline of Key Events for the Statewide Drug Court Evaluation (Revised Oct. 2011)

- July 2007: Statewide Drug Court Standards Adopted
 - Adult Drug Courts
- July 2007 – December 2008: Drug Court Cohort Begins Drug Court
- July 2007 – November 2011: Statewide Drug Court Evaluation Data Collection
 - Collect Participants in Cohort
 - Define and Collect Information on Comparison Group
 - Collect and analyze recidivism, use of jail and prison, and participant community functioning outcomes
- January 2011: Statewide Drug Court Evaluation: Preliminary Analysis
 - Use of Cost Effective Evidence-Based Practices in Minnesota Drug Courts
- Spring 2012: Statewide Drug Court Evaluation: Final Report
 - Analysis of Drug Court Goals and all Research Questions

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Courts Included in the Statewide Drug Court Evaluation

- Aitkin Hybrid Drug Court,
- Blue Earth Hybrid Drug Court,
- Brown/ Nicollet/ Watonwan Adult Drug Court,
- Clay/ Becker Adult Drug Court,
- Crow Wing Adult Drug Court,
- Dakota Adult Drug Court,
- Dodge Hybrid Drug Court,
- Faribault/ Martin/ Jackson Adult Drug Court,
- Hennepin Adult Drug Court,
- Itasca Hybrid Drug Court,
- Koochiching Hybrid Drug Court,
- Ramsey Adult Drug Court,
- St. Louis South - Duluth Adult Drug Court,
- St. Louis North - Range Adult Drug Court,
- Stearns Adult Drug Court, and
- Wabasha Hybrid Drug Court

General Overview

This general overview provides information on some key concepts that will be analyzed as part of the evaluation.

1. A statewide approach will be used to answer the research questions regarding whether adult drug courts in Minnesota are achieving their stated goals and meeting statewide standards.
2. The study seeks to determine whether offenders placed in Minnesota drug courts (**cohort**) have lower recidivism rates than offenders randomly selected across the state who have been charged with **similar crimes**, are at **similar risk to reoffend** and have a **similar need for treatment** but were not placed in a drug court.
3. The study also seeks to determine whether offenders placed in drug courts spend less time incarcerated in jail or prison than the **comparison group**.
4. This approach is not designed to analyze **the specific components of drug courts** and their potential impact on recidivism and incarceration.
5. The study will analyze if drug courts are holding offenders accountable to the sentences for their crimes.
6. The study will analyze if drug courts are holding offenders accountable to the requirements of the drug court.

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7. The study will analyze whether drugs courts are meeting **certain statewide standards** adopted by the Judicial Council.
8. The study will provide a demographic profile of both the cohort and the comparison group.
9. The study will examine whether differences in recidivism exist in the comparison group by various breakdowns including **demographics, dispositions, sentences, and social and risk & need factors** and if possible will compare recidivism rates between the cohort and comparison group controlling for these types of breakdowns.
10. The study will examine whether differences in recidivism exist in the cohort by similar characteristics as the comparison group, where possible, as well as **structural characteristics** of the drug courts included in the evaluation.

Definitions of Key Terms in General Overview

1. **Cohort:** The population of drug court participants for this evaluation. The Drug Court Cohort consists of participants who were accepted into drug court between July 1, 2007 and December 31, 2008 whose most serious charge was not a DWI. Participants were not excluded if they had a DWI accompanying a more serious charge (e.g. participant with a Felony Property charge and a Gross Misdemeanor DWI would be included in the Cohort).
2. **Comparison group:** The sample of court participants similar to the Drug Court Cohort.
3. **Similar crimes:** The offenses for the Cohort were used to determine the offenses for inclusion in the comparison group. The most serious charge for almost all Cohort participants (97%) was Felony Drug, Felony Property, or Felony Other. These were the “similar crimes” used to identify potential comparison group participants.
4. **Similar risk to reoffend:** Risk to re-offend is the level of risk attributed to a participant from a risk assessment tool. The risk assessment tools used to assess risk to reoffend in this evaluation are LSI-R, RANT, and Wisconsin.
5. **Similar need for treatment:** A participant’s need for treatment is defined as an assessment of chemical dependence or substance use disorder in a Rule 25 or private assessment.
6. **The specific components of drug courts:** The specific components of drug courts include, but are not limited to differences in eligibility criteria, single or multiple judge court, treatment providers (one or multiple providers), type of treatment and other services available, etc.
7. **Certain statewide standards:** In June 2007, the Judicial Council passed the Drug Court Standards (JC Policy 511.1). This evaluation will monitor whether drug courts are in compliance with some of these standards. The standards to be evaluated as part of the evaluation are: I, II, III, IV, V, VI, and XI.

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8. **Demographics:** The demographics of interest in this evaluation are race, age, geographic location, and sex.
9. **Dispositions:** The disposition type for comparison group participants include convicted, continued/stayed (which includes diversion), and probation before conviction.
10. **Sentences:** Sentence components include, but are not limited to incarceration, treatment, and community service.
11. **Social factors:** Social factors include income, marital status, family status (kids), education, employment, and driver's license status.
12. **Risk & need factors:** Risk factors include criminal history and risk as defined by a risk assessment tool (e.g. LSI-R). Need factors include chemical dependency assessment from a Rule 25 or private assessment.
13. **Structural characteristics:** These include, but are not limited to, drug/hybrid court, mandatory/non-mandatory courts, and courts who take expanded sets of offenses to the traditional 4th and 5th degree drug cases.

Research Questions in Statewide Drug Court Evaluation

The Statewide Drug Court Evaluation includes research questions and key measures for the three goals of drug courts, as well as the specific requirements stated in the Drug Court Standards ([see Drug Court Standards](#)).

Goal 1: Enhancing Public Safety

The research question and key measure for Enhancing Public Safety is:

1. Are rates of recidivism lower for adult drug court or hybrid court participants (excluding DWI participants)?
 - a) Measure: Fewer new¹ convictions for drug court participants than the comparison group

Goal 2: Ensuring Participant Accountability

The research questions and key measures for Ensuring Participant Accountability are:

2. Are drug court participants complying with treatment requirements?
 - a) Measure: Proportion of drug court participants in compliance with treatment requirements
3. Do drug court participants show improvement in community functioning?
Measures:

¹ "New" is defined as follows: the offense date has to be **after** the drug court participant's date of admission to drug court, and after the date of disposition for the comparison group participants. Probation violations alone are **not** considered "new" offenses.

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- a) Proportion of drug court participants who were unemployed at entry and are employed when they leave the program
 - b) Proportion of drug court participants with improvements in educational status from entry to when they leave the program
 - c) Proportion of drug court participants who were homeless at entry and have a place to live when they leave the program
 - d) Proportion of drug court participants who did not have a valid driver's license at entry and have a valid driver's license when they leave the program
 - e) Proportion of drug court participants who were out of compliance with child support obligations at entry who are in compliance with obligations to pay child support when they leave the program
4. How many drug court participants successfully complete the program?
- a) Measure: Proportion of drug court participants who graduate from drug court (graduation rate)
5. How many days are drug court participants sober before discharge?
- a) Measure: Average number of days since last known use prior to graduation/termination for drug court participants
6. Do drug court participants succeed in treatment?
- a) Measure: Proportion of drug court participants who receive treatment
 - b) Measure: Average number of hours of treatment received
 - c) Measure: Proportion of drug court participants who successfully complete a treatment program as part of drug court
 - b) Measure: Treatment completion (successful) by primary substance

The measures above will be analyzed for individuals who have been discharged from drug court, regardless of their completion status (e.g. graduated, terminated, etc.).

Goal 3: Reducing Costs to Society

The research question and key measure for Reducing Costs to Society is:

7. Are drug court participants spending less time in jail and prison?
- a) Measure: Average number of days in jail and/or prison from admission to the program to their program end date
 - b) Measure: Average number of days in jail and/or prison from admission to the program to one year post-program completion/termination

The analysis, similar to in research question one, included all drug court and comparison group participants, and analyzed all jail and prison time served by participants from their respective start dates, in yearly intervals.

Key Measures Related to the Drug Court Standards and Evidence Based Practices

The research questions and key measures for the drug court standards are below.

8. Do drug court teams work together collaboratively? (Standard I and IV)
- a) Measure: Proportion of drug court team members who agree or strongly agree that drug court policies and procedures are developed collaboratively

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- b) Measure: Proportion of drug courts that require treatment representatives at court hearings
 - c) Measure: Proportion of drug court teams that include law enforcement as a team member
 - d) Measure: Proportion of drug courts that required team members to attend staffings
 - e) Measure: Proportion of drug courts with formal partnerships with community organizations or community members active in the drug court process
9. Are the distinct roles of the prosecutor and defense counsel maintained in drug court? (Standard II)
- a) Measure: Proportion of drug court team members who agree or strongly agree that prosecuting attorneys and defense counsel are full partners in the drug court process.
 - b) Measure: Proportion of drug courts that expected the defense counsel to attend all team staffings
 - c) Measure: Proportion of drug courts that expected the prosecutor to attend all team staffings
10. Are drug court team members assigned to the team for at least one year? (Standard II)
- a) Measure: Proportion of drug court team members involved with the drug court for more than one year.
11. Are drug courts participants assessed as high risk, high need? (Standard III)
- a) Measure: Proportion of drug court participants who are determined to be high risk and high need
12. Are participant eligibility criteria flexible? (Standard III)
- a) Measure: Proportion of drug courts that accept participants with non-drug charges
 - b) Measure: Proportion of drug courts that have participants with non-drug charges
13. Is there a coordinated strategy governing responses of the drug court team to each participant's performance and progress? (Standard IV)
- a) Measure: Proportion of drug courts using a single coordinated treatment agency
 - b) Measure: Proportion of drug courts that include a phase focused on relapse prevention
 - c) Measure: Proportion of drug court that have written rules for team responses for sanctions and incentives
14. Are drug court participants assessed promptly? (Standard V)
- a) Measure: Average number of days between acceptance into drug court and chemical health assessment
15. Are drug court participants attending treatment promptly? (Standard V)
- a) Measure: Average number of days between acceptance into drug court and admission to treatment
16. Are drug court participants appearing in front of the drug court judge promptly? (Standard VI)
- a) Measure: Proportion of drug court participants appearing in front of the drug court judge within 14 days from acceptance into drug court
17. Do drug courts require participants to appear in front of a judge at least twice monthly for the first four months? (Standard VI)

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- a) Measure: Proportion of drug courts with policies requiring at least twice monthly appearances in front of the drug court judge.
 - b) Measure: Proportion of courts with judges who stayed on the team at least two years
 - c) Measure: Average amount of time participants spend with the judge during court hearings
18. Is abstinence monitored by frequent alcohol and drug testing? (Standard VII)
- a) Measure: Proportion of drug courts that performed drug testing 2 or more times per week during Phase 1
 - b) Measure: Proportion of drug courts that receive drug test results within 48 hours
 - c) Measure: Proportion of drug courts that require 90 days of abstinence at graduation
 - d) Measure: Proportion of participants who have 90 days of abstinence at discharge (successful and/or unsuccessful discharge)
19. Are the services provided respectful of cultural diversity? (Standard IX)
- a) Measure: Proportion of drug court participants receiving treatment who agreed the services they received were in a language they could understand
 - b) Measure: Proportion of drug court participants receiving treatment who agreed the services they received were respectful of their culture
20. Do drug court team members receive continuing interdisciplinary education? (Standard XI)
- a) Measure: Proportion of drug court team members who agree or strongly agree opportunities exist to receive on-going training as needed.
 - b) Measure: Proportion of drug court team members who agree or strongly agree all drug court team members receive needed education and training.
 - c) Measure: Proportion of drug courts that received DCPI training prior to implementation
21. Do drug courts evaluate their effectiveness and use data to make modifications? (Standard XII)
- a) Measure: Proportion of drug courts that evaluate effectiveness by completing process and/or outcome evaluations
 - b) Measure: Proportion of drug courts that have implemented modifications based on descriptive participant data or evaluation recommendations